

A Resurrected Savior

Resurrection eggs?" asked Paula.

"Yes, they are 12 plastic eggs with small symbols of the Resurrection story," smiled Amber. "One egg has a leaf to represent the palm branches at Jesus' entry, one has three quarters for the 30 pieces of silver, and one has a thimble for the cup at the Last Supper, and so on."

"Well, I just want Karim to enjoy the Easter season with the Easter bunny and eggs," said Paula. "I don't want to get her confused about a bloody murder and 'God' rising from the dead."

Amber was having her annual Easter party for her small children. She invited children from her church and neighborhood. This year, she also mentioned it at work, and Paula asked if her six-year-old, Karim, could come. Now that Amber was discussing some of the particulars, Paula was having second thoughts.

"I do believe in God, and I do think it is good to be good," Paula rambled. "But I don't think it's necessary to stress things we can't be certain of."

"I appreciate your honesty, Paula. However, without the death of Christ and His resurrection, there is no Christian faith. We have no hope."

"I have hope in my family and friends," Paula murmured.

"I'm sure you have wonderful family and friends," said Amber. "But they are human. We need God. We need a Savior. That is why Christ came to earth to die and rise again. That is where I have my hope!"

1. *In what ways do you see yourself becoming more like our Lord Jesus?*

2. *Why is it crucial to your salvation that you are being transformed into the image of Christ?*

3. *How does your salvation in Christ affect your relationships with others?*

The Historical Reality of Jesus' Resurrection

1 Corinthians 15:1-8, KJV

1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

1 Corinthians 15:1-8, NIV

¹Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand.

²By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

³For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Cephas, and

then to the Twelve. ⁶After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

Some of the Corinthians did not believe in the bodily resurrection of the dead. Paul countered this error by first reminding his readers that when he came to Corinth, he proclaimed the “gospel” (vs. 1). They not only accepted the Good News then, but they also based their faith upon it. Yet, now some of them had begun to believe that there was no future resurrection—an

idea contradictory to the Gospel. Paul warned his readers that if they held to that conclusion, their faith was made pointless. So Paul repeated the truths about Jesus' death and resurrection.

The first truth is that, in accordance with the "Scriptures" (see Isa. 52:13—53:12), Jesus offered Himself on the Cross to atone for humanity's "sins." His death was not a tragic accident but had a purpose—namely, to redeem sinners. He was then "buried" (vs. 4), certifying the reality of His death. The final truth is that Jesus was raised from death on the "third day" (Sunday morning), as Scripture had foretold (Ps. 16:8-11; Matt. 14:20).

After rising from the dead, Jesus first presented Himself alive to "Cephas" (1 Cor. 15:5; Peter), then the rest of the "Twelve." These appearances proved the reality of the Lord's resurrection. After that, the Savior was seen by over 500 of His followers at one time. Though some of them had died ("fallen asleep," vs. 6), many of them were still alive. Jesus also appeared to His half-brother James, then to "all the apostles." Finally, Jesus presented Himself alive to Paul on the Damascus road (Acts 9:3-6). Paul stated that his new-birth experience was somehow abnormal or occurred at the wrong time. This may be an allusion to his former life, in which he pursued and tyrannized Christians.

4. *Of what value was the Gospel to Paul's readers?*

5. *What were the key truths of the Gospel that Paul declared?*

The Necessity of Jesus' Resurrection

1 Corinthians 15:12-14, 20-23, KJV

12 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

13 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. . . .

1 Corinthians 15:12-14, 20-23, NIV

¹²But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.

²⁰But Christ has indeed been

KJV

20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

NIV

raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ²²For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. ²³But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.

Paul argued that the general resurrection and Jesus' conquering death are inseparably linked. So, to deny the truth that everyone at the second advent would be raised meant that the Messiah was still dead and buried, and proclaiming the Gospel was pointless. Further, Jesus' followers remained dead in their sins and thus eternally doomed. So, Christians deserved more pity than anyone else, since their hope for salvation was baseless (vss. 17-19).

However, Paul argued that all these conclusions were wrong, for Jesus is the "firstfruits" (vs. 20) of those who would be resurrected. At harvest time, Israelite farmers took the first and finest portions of their crops and offered them to the Lord (Lev. 23:9-14). In a manner of speaking, Jesus' resurrection was the down payment and guarantee of the believers' resurrection.

Jesus' resurrection is linked to the sin of Adam (and Eve) in Eden. Because Adam sinned, sin and death spread to all humanity. But as one man's disobedience brought death to all, in the same way, another man's obedience would result in resurrection to eternal life for all who "belong to him" (vs. 23).

6. What logical contradiction did Paul challenge in 1 Corinthians 15:12?

7. What implication did Paul draw from a denial of Jesus' resurrection?

8. What comparisons did Paul make between Adam and Jesus?

The Nature of the Resurrection Body

1 Corinthians 15:42-45, KJV

42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

43 It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:

44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

45 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.

1 Corinthians 15:42-45, NIV

⁴²So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; ⁴³it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. ⁴⁵So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.

After pointing out the consequences of denying the resurrection (vss. 29-34), Paul talked about the nature of the resurrection body (vss. 35-41). Like a seed, a human body is "sown" (vs. 42) in a "perishable" form and resurrected in an "imperishable" form. On one hand, the mortal human body exists in a state of "dishonor" (vs. 43) and "weakness." On the other hand, the eternal human body is glorious and powerful. A person's earth-bound shell is "natural" (vs. 44) and fallen, whereas its resurrected counterpart is "spiritual" and perfected. As with a seed placed in the ground and the plant it produces, there is both continuity and a splendid difference between what dies and what is raised from the dead.

Paul again compared Adam and Jesus. When God breathed life into the first human, he became a "living being" with a physical, natural body. In contrast to the "first Adam" (vs. 45), the "last Adam"—Jesus—became a "life-giving spirit." The historical reality of Jesus' resurrection ensures that His followers will conquer death in union with Him at His second advent.

9. *In what ways do the earthly and resurrection bodies of people contrast?*

Blessed Assurance

Fanny Crosby was born on March 24, 1820. Because her father died while she was still an infant, her mother became a maid to support her family. Her grandmother subsequently cared for her, raising her to have a deep faith in Jesus. It was this faith that gave her the strength to overcome her blindness, which afflicted her from the time she was a baby.

Her grandmother regularly read the Bible to Fanny while teaching her to pray in every situation. Despite her physical disability, Fanny became a popular Christian poet and songwriter. Her best-known song was written in collaboration with composer Phoebe Knapp. That song is “Blessed Assurance.”

The first line of this song is “Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine,” followed by “Heir of salvation . . . washed in His blood.” This hymn perfectly expresses our confidence in Jesus’ atonement for our sins and our salvation in Him. Crosby may not have seen the physical world with all its beauty and sorrows, but she clearly saw the spiritual life that we have in Jesus.

During her lifetime, Fanny wrote more than 8,000 hymns and gospel songs and became known as the “Queen of Gospel Song Writers.” Because of her Christian beliefs, she became an ardent abolitionist while dedicating her entire life to the poor as a rescue mission worker. At the age of 94, Fanny passed away, leaving a musical legacy that is celebrated to this day. On May 1, 1955, a large marble monument was erected in her honor. It contained the first stanza of “Blessed Assurance.”

Easter reminds us of Jesus’ resurrection, which gives us the assurance of our salvation in Him. Oh, what a blessing to have Jesus as our Savior and Lord!

10. *Why is being assured of salvation in Christ such a blessing for you?*

11. *How does your assurance in what Jesus has done for you affect your day-to-day decisions?*

12. *Despite the blessings that Jesus’ resurrection afford, why is it difficult to trust that this event occurred historically?*

A Letter to the Lord

Paul rebuked the Corinthians for abandoning what he had taught them about the resurrection of Christ. In his letter to them, he had to remind them that since God raised Jesus from the grave, He will also raise everyone from the dead. Moreover, those who are followers of Christ will abide with Him forever. This assurance rested on their faith in Jesus' resurrection.

► *Take a few minutes to write a letter to God, thanking Him for loving you so much that He sent His Son to die for your sins on the Cross. Also, praise Him for raising Jesus from the dead so that you may live eternally with Him. Finally, if you have not received Jesus as your Lord and Savior, do that now in this letter by telling Him that is what you are doing.*

KEY VERSE

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. —1 Corinthians 15:19-20, KJV

If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

—1 Corinthians 15:19-20, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of April 13 through April 19

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Esther 3:1-6—Mordecai Refuses to Bow to Haman.
- Tues.** Esther 3:7-11—Haman Sets Decree to Destroy the Jews.
- Wed.** Esther 5:9-14—Haman Builds Gallows to Hang Mordecai.
- Thurs.** Esther 8:3-8, 16-17—Decree against Jews Struck Down.
- Fri.** Esther 9:18-23, 29-32—Festival of Purim Established.
- Sat.** Esther 10:1-3—Mordecai Advances Welfare of the Jews.
- Sun.** Esther 7:1-10—Esther's Plea and Haman's Punishment.